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ABSTRACT

Trends in student movement initiated a study regarding student withdrawals and admissions involving North York (Ontario) elementary school pupils. Telephone interviews (n=306) were conducted with parents of children withdrawn from the public school system. Questionnaires (n=316) were mailed to parents whose children were transferred into the North York system. A total of 86 questionnaires (27 percent) were returned; with the findings based on the responses of 70 parents. Loss as a consequence of non-public education was viewed as children no longer having friends in the neighborhood, and less comparable quality and variety of non-academic activities and facilities. Local schools, better academic programs, and the availability of special programs were reasons for admission to the public school system. Higher academic standards and curriculum, better discipline, and smaller classes were the most common reasons for student transfer and the most prevalent suggestions to improve the North York school system. (Author/PN)

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THE ADMISSION AND WITHDRAWAL OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PUPILS TO AND FROM NORTH YORK PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A SURVEY OF PARENTS

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February, 1982

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BACKGROUND

During the past few years concern has been expressed by Trustees and Senior Staff about the number of children leaving North York public schools to attend private and separate schools. Between June, 1980 and June, 1981, for instance, over 2,050 students (about 3% of our total enrolment) left our system for private and separate schools, with the greatest loss (82% of all withdrawals) occurring at the elementary level, particularly in the primary grades (i.e. JK-3). Because such departures accentuate the decline in enrolments being experienced by the Board stemming from decreasing birth rates, particular concern has been expressed about these additional losses. It should be noted, however, that the Board also gains students who transfer to the public school system from private and separate schools. In fact, during the period mentioned above, over 1,860 students entered our system in this way. It is interesting to note that the bulk of these were admitted at the junior high and secondary school levels. It was on the basis of such trends in student movement that the present study was initiated. Because the North York system experiences so many withdrawals at the elementary level, it was decided that the main focus of the study should be on withdrawals and admissions involving elementary school pupils.

PURPOSE

This study was initiated for the following reasons:

1) to determine why parents withdraw their children from public elementary schools and under what circumstances they would be willing to return their children to the public system

2) to determine why parents decide to send their children to the public system from private or separate schools

The report has been divided into two major sections, the first dealing with withdrawals and the second with admissions to the public system. Each section describes the methodology used and findings obtained for that particular part of the investigation.

PART I

PUPILS WITHDRAWN FROM NORTH YORK PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO ATTEND SEPARATE AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

METHOD

The decision was made to conduct personal telephone interviews with parents who had withdrawn their children from our system because it was felt that gathering information from these parents could be a sensitive matter. It was thought that a telephone conversation would allow some opportunity for rapport to be established and thus would enhance the likelihood of obtaining comprehensive information.

Development of Interview

A telephone interview guide was developed based on questions used in a similar study conducted by the Toronto Board of Education[1] and on informal discussions with a small number of elementary school principals. Before its finalization, the interview was vetted with the Board's supervisory officers and then pilot tested with a small number of parents. Based on the reactions of these groups, revisions were made to simplify and clarify the wording of the interview so that it would flow more naturally. The interview schedule, in its final form (see Appendix A), included items which asked parents to relate why their child had been withdrawn from the public school system, what the child had gained or lost from the transfer, and the conditions under which the parent might be willing to consider returning the child to the public school system.

Interviewers

To conduct the interviews, six interviewers were hired and trained. It was arranged that two of these would be Italian or Spanish speaking to accommodate two of the larger groups of non-English speaking parents in North York.

A half-day training session was conducted for the interviewers in which they were made familiar with the interview guide and given instruction on how to handle any problems that might arise. During the session, they were also given the opportunity to role play interviews using the guide. This was to ensure that a smooth and consistent style was adopted by each interviewer and to allow them to develop greater familiarity and comfort with the interview technique.

Each interviewer was then given a supply of interviewing materials as well as a short list of names of parents to be called during the following week. At the end of that time, a two hour follow-up session was held for the interviewers during which they returned their completed interviews and shared their

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1 Wayne, Susan. Student Withdrawals to Private Schools: The Parents' Perspective. Toronto Board of Education, October, 1980.

interviewing experiences. Strategies were discussed for dealing with problems that had arisen, and final clarifications were made regarding the interviewing process in general. At the end of this session, more materials and lists of names were distributed, and thereafter, completed interviews were returned by the interviewers to Research & Evaluation Services on a weekly basis. One of the Research staff members working on the study made regular contact with the interviewers supplying them with additional materials and name lists as necessary and helping them with any concerns that arose.

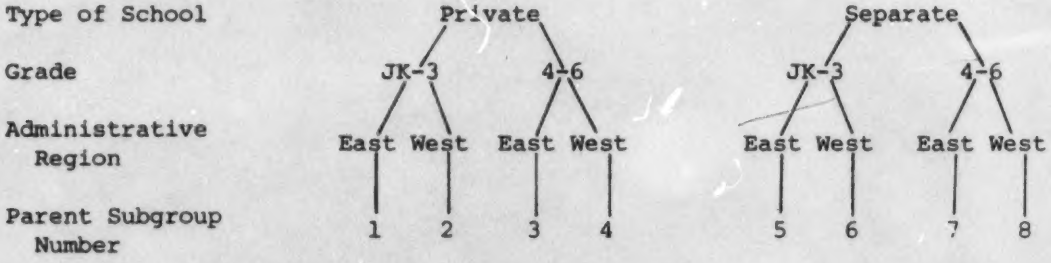
Sample

In order to select a representative sample of parents to be interviewed, computer lists were first prepared of all parents of elementary pupils who had transferred their children out of the North York public school system during the period of June 1 to October 15, 1980. (This group represented about 86% of all the elementary withdrawals that had occurred during the period from June, 1980, to June, 1981.) It should be noted that at the time the study was conducted, most of these children had had at least a full year's experience outside the public school system.

Three factors were considered in preparing the computer lists:

- the type of school to which the child was sent (i.e. private or separate)
- the grade at which the child was withdrawn (i.e. JK-3 or 4-6)
- the administrative region of the home school (i.e. east or west of Yonge Street)

Thus, lists were produced for eight subgroups of parents as the following illustration suggests:



The target was to complete 40 interviews with parents in each of these subgroups to obtain a total of 320 interviews.

Four of the six interviewers were assigned randomly to parent subgroups, while the remaining two interviewers, the language experts, were assigned specifically to groups having high proportions of non-English speaking parents. Each interviewer was periodically given several pages of names and phone numbers drawn randomly from the computer lists for her specific subgroup. When an interviewer completed the full complement of 40 interviews for a subgroup, she was then assigned to a new subgroup. By allowing each interviewer to work

exclusively with a specific subgroup it was felt that the interviewer could become more familiar with the characteristics of the particular group (e.g. the group's geographical area, and the destination and grade level of the children withdrawn), and thus that interviewer-parent rapport could be maximized. Furthermore, it was thought that it would be easier for one interviewer to keep track of the records for a group (e.g. the number of completed interviews) than for this responsibility to be divided among several people.

Interviewers were instructed not to phone parents with unlisted telephone numbers so as not to violate the Board's commitment to respect such parents' privacy. Interviewers were also asked to refer any language difficulties encountered to their Italian and Spanish speaking co-workers. Finally, interviewers were asked to remain alert for instances in which more than one child from a given family had been listed on the computer sheets. This was done to eliminate the possibility of interviewing the same parent more than once.

Data Collection

Telephone interviews were conducted during a six week period in October and November, 1981. During this period, a total of 306 interviews were completed. For six of the eight parent subgroups it was possible to interview the full target number of 40 parents. Altogether, there were only 28 pupils listed for Subgroup 4. Fortunately, it was possible to complete interviews with the parents of all of these children. For Subgroup 1, 38 interviews were completed.

Thirty-six interviews were conducted in Italian and nine in Spanish. These 45 interviews constituted approximately 15% of the total sample.

A form was designed to enable interviewers to keep a record of the calls they had made. An examination of these records shows that approximately 720 calls were placed in order to complete 306 interviews. Ten percent of these calls were placed to numbers that were no longer in service.

It was suggested to interviewers that if parents were not reached on the first try, no more than two other attempts should be made to contact them. Interviewers reported that for the interviews they completed they had reached about 25% of the parents on the first call and an additional 50% on the second. To reach the remaining parents, three or more calls were required. Parents were most readily reached in the late afternoon, between 4:00 and 5:00 p.m., and in the evenings between 7:00 and 8:30 p.m.

The surveys were generally very well received. Parents seemed to welcome the opportunity to talk about their children's education. The main difficulty encountered was in terminating interviews as parents frequently wished to talk about various aspects of education which were not related to the survey. On the average, however, each interview took approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Only eight parents refused to be interviewed. Two others wanted confirmation of the legitimacy of the survey but agreed to grant interviews after being reassured by one of the Research staff members.

Several parents spoke languages for which no interpreter was available (e.g. Hungarian, Chinese) and, therefore, it was not possible to complete these interviews.

The results of the telephone survey are presented in the section on findings which follows.

FINDINGS

While the data were compiled in terms of the eight parent subgroups previously described, the discussion in this section of findings focusses on responses given by parents in two main groups:

(a) those who sent their children to private schools

(b) those who sent their children to separate schools

Any significant findings related to differences between primary and junior levels or between geographical areas are noted, where appropriate, in the text. Tables containing detailed data for all subgroups may be found in Appendix B.

Throughout this section, the data have been presented in tables in the form of percentages. The total number of respondents in each group (N) has been indicated wherever percentages are reported. Where these numbers are less than 100 (and this is often the case in the tables in Appendix B), the reader should note that a large percentage may actually represent a small number of parents.

Each interview was begun with corroborating questions designed to determine: (1) if the information about withdrawal from a North York school was correct and (2) if the child had subsequently been readmitted to a North York school.

All parents were asked the question about why they had decided to transfer their children to either a separate or private school. In cases where the child had been readmitted to a North York school, parents were also asked why they had changed their minds. The interviews with this group of respondents were then terminated as the other questions in the survey were not relevant for them.

Grade Level at Time of Withdrawal

TABLE 1

Primary Grades	PRIVATE East (N=38) %	PRIVATE West (N=40) %	PRIVATE Total (N=78) %	SEPARATE East (N=40) %	SEPARATE West (N=40) %	SEPARATE Total (N=80) %	TOTAL (N=158) %
JK	21	13	17	7	15	11	14
SK	63	55	59	25	25	25	42
1	8	25	17	28	27	28	22
2	5	7	6	20	18	19	13
3	3	-	1	15	15	15	8
Primary Remedial	-	-	-	5	-	2	1

Junior Grades	PRIVATE East (N=40) %	PRIVATE West (N=28) %	PRIVATE Total (N=68) %	SEPARATE East (N=40) %	SEPARATE West (N=40) %	SEPARATE Total (N=80) %	TOTAL (N=148) %
4	32	32	32	23	40	31	32
5	15	7	12	45	22	34	24
6	48	61	53	32	38	35	43
Junior Remedial	5	-	3	-	-	-	1

As can be seen from Table 1, at the time of withdrawal from North York schools, the children of 158 of the parents interviewed were in the primary grades and the children of the other 148 were in the junior grades so that primary grade children represented 52% and junior grade children 48% of the total sample.

At the primary level, the largest percentage of withdrawals occurred at SK (42%); at the junior level the largest percentage (43%) occurred at grade 6.

There is some difference in the grade leaving patterns between the separate and private schools. At the primary level, more than half (59%) left for private schools from the SK level, whereas there was a steady flow to the separate schools from all grades, though it was largest at the SK and grade 1 levels. At the junior level, the largest exodus to private schools was from grade 6 (53%) whereas the flow to separate schools was more evenly distributed (i.e. 31% at grade 4, 34% at grade 5 and 35% at grade 6).

Reasons for Transfer

Parents were asked what their reasons were for transferring their children out of the North York system. The five most common reasons parents gave for transferring their children were related to: a desire for a Christian religious education; higher academic standards; better discipline; concern about the closing of neighbourhood schools, and study of the Hebrew language, culture and religion.

Twenty-eight percent of all respondents wanted their children to have a Christian religious education. This was listed by 45% of those who sent their children to separate schools, especially at the primary levels, both in the eastern and western areas. These parents were particularly interested in the availability of catechism and communion classes. They also expressed the wish for their children to have a general Catholic education. The 10% who wanted a non-Catholic Christian education and sent their children to private parochial schools were mainly clustered in the western area. Many identified themselves as Seventh Day Adventists.

Twenty-six percent of all respondents said they were interested in higher academic standards and a more challenging curriculum and environment. This response was most prevalent among the private school groups, particularly at the junior grades (72%). A number of these parents indicated that they wanted the more demanding curriculum offered by the Toronto French School or the University of Toronto Schools.

Twenty percent were looking for stricter discipline. This was generally a more common factor for private school parents (27%) than for separate school parents (17%). In the area east of Yonge Street at the junior level, about one-third of parents considered this an important reason regardless of which system (private or separate) they had chosen.

Sixteen percent were unhappy about the closing of local schools. This was especially true among the parents of primary grade children transferred to separate schools in the area west of Yonge, 58% of whom stated this was an important consideration. These parents expressed concern about the distance their children would have had to walk to their new public school and the fear that these schools might also be closed, creating further disruption for their children.

Fifteen percent of the total, representing 32% of private school respondents wanted their children to be rooted in their Hebrew language, culture and religion. This was most evident at the primary level where 53% of this group of respondents stated that this was their reason for withdrawing their children from the public school system.

A number of other reasons for withdrawals were given by small percentages of parents. Some wanted smaller classes; others were unhappy with the junior high system, disliked the open plan classroom, were dissatisfied with the quality of teaching, felt the transfer made it more convenient for them as working parents, said that their other children had transferred to another

system, or were frustrated because their children's special needs were not being met.

Table 2 summarizes all responses to this question.

TABLE 2

What were the most important considerations in your decision to transfer your child to a Separate/Private School?	Private (N=146) %	Separate (N=160) %	Total (N=306) %
Wanted child to have a Christian religious education/preferred availability of communion and catechism classes so child did not have to attend weekend classes	10	45	28
Higher academic standards/more challenging curriculum and environment/more emphasis on basics/development of better working habits/homework given	45	9	26
Better discipline/dress/particularly at junior high level	27	17	20
Neighbourhood school closed/wanted stability/afraid transfer school would also close/public school too far/ didn't want child bused/transfer school French Immersion - afraid English skills would be weak/didn't like exposure to older children in JK-8 setting	7	25	16
Wanted child to learn Hebrew language/ culture/religion	32	-	15
Smaller classes/more individual attention/child needed extra assistance	10	6	8
Didn't want child to attend junior high/ junior high has bad reputation, e.g. drug problem/prefer continuity of K-8 program	7	13	7
Prefer traditional learning environment/don't like open plan/wanted school to have stricter control over learning	10	4	6
Not satisfied with the quality of teaching/teacher child relationship	5	6	5

Reasons for Transfer (cont'd)	Private (N=146) %	Separate (N=160) %	Total (N=306) %
Convenience for working parent/lunch provided/closer to babysitter/longer day/day-long French Immersion available at JK level/availability of after school activities	4	4	3
Wanted child to have better French program/to become multilingual	3	3	3
Always intended to have child attend private school/family tradition	15	-	2
Other children in family attending separate or private school (if separate, required to transfer all children)	1	4	2
Frustrated because unable to get help for child's special needs (speech, auditory, learning disability, emotional and social behaviour problems)	2	1	2
Other: - Poor communication between teacher-parent/school-parent - Not satisfied with child's academic performance - Lack of leadership in school - Didn't like reporting system as never knew how child was doing in relation to others - Felt Canadian-born child was held back because school caters to language needs of immigrant children - Didn't like split grades - Wanted music program at St. Michael's College School	2	6	4

Readmission to the North York Public System

A total of 18 of the parents who were interviewed indicated they had reversed their decision to transfer their children and had readmitted them to the public school system. These parents were asked to explain their reasons for reversing their decision.

TABLE 3

What were your reasons for reversing this decision and readmitting your child to the public system?	Private (N=13) %	Separate (N=5) %	Total (N=18) %
School did not live up to expectations/ discipline no better/school too small; classes of only four/school constantly moving to new location/school was in unsafe neighbourhood/school was very old and poorly equipped	38	80	50
High tuition fees	46	-	33
Child had difficulty adjusting to new school	30	20	28
Child wanted to be with neighbourhood friends	8	20	11
Child benefitted from special program in private school for a year/public school system is good and we're trying again though we're disappointed that child did not get special help needed so that special schooling was necessary	16	-	11
Other, e.g. wanted child to attend junior high for grades 7 and 8/availability of full day French program at Jean Lajoie	8	20	11

As is indicated in Table 3, the most common reason given (by 50% of these parents) was that the school had not lived up to their expectations, either academically or in matters of discipline. Thirty-three percent found private school fees very expensive, 28% said their children had difficulty adjusting to the new school, 11% felt their children preferred to be with neighbourhood friends, and 11% believe their children had made sufficient progress with the special help they obtained in private schools so that they could return to the public system.

The interviews with this group of parents were terminated after this question as subsequent questions were not relevant to them.

Types of Alternatives Considered

Parents were asked whether or not they had considered other alternatives than the school they chose and, if they had, what those alternatives were.

Only 9% (i.e. 27) of the parents said they had considered other alternatives (10% of the private and 9% of the separate school groups).

TABLE 4

Types of Alternatives Considered	Private* (N=13) %	Separate* (N=14) %	Total* (N=27) %
Private School/other private school than one chosen	8	93	52
Separate school	42	-	19
Private parochial	15	14	15
Other public schools	23	-	11
French Immersion school	8	-	4
School for the deaf	8	-	4

* Totals more than 100% as some parents had considered more than one alternative.

As Table 4 indicates, most of those who sent their children to separate schools had looked at only one other alternative, namely, a private school. On the other hand, the parents of children attending private schools had considered a variety of alternatives which included separate schools, private parochial schools, other public schools, French Immersion schools or a special school for the deaf.

Problems Perceived in Public Schools

Parents were asked if there were any problems in North York schools which had influenced their decision to transfer their children.

A total of 48% of the parents said there were problems in North York schools which influenced their decision to transfer their children to another school system. This represented 57% of the private school group (especially at the junior levels where 79% of parents said there were problems) and 39% of the separate school group.

As is illustrated in Table 5, 23% of the total felt that there was a lack of discipline (28% of the separate and 23% of the private school groups). Sixteen percent thought that academic standards were not high enough. This problem was mentioned most frequently by the private school group (26% compared to 11% of the separate school group). Eleven percent felt that classes were too large and that the individual needs of their children were not being met. Others were not happy with the quality of teaching, had concerns about the junior high system (e.g. drug problems, bad reputation), were unhappy with the quality of communication between the school or the teacher and the parents, didn't like the open classroom, thought the closing of neighbourhood schools had created difficulties, or felt that their children's special needs had not been met.

TABLE 5

Type of Problem	Private (N=133) %	Separate (N=155) %	Total (N=288) %
No problem reported	43	61	52
Lack of discipline/too much freedom/ lack of respect/poor moral behaviour, e.g. swearing	23	28	23
Academic standards not high enough/curriculum not stimulating/not enough emphasis on basics/child bored/unmotivated/too many frills/no homework	26	11	16
Classes too large/individual needs not met	12	8	11
Not satisfied with quality of teaching/teachers incompetent/prejudiced/ unprofessional in behaviour/lack warmth/have no personal interest in children	11	4	7
Don't like junior high school/has bad reputation/has drug problem/is too large/don't like rotary system	8	4	6
Poor communication between teacher-parents/principal-parents/school-parents/school indifferent to child's problems/did not communicate with parents about problems	5	5	5
Don't like open classrooms/not suitable for child	3	3	3
Neighbourhood school closed/too far for young child to walk/no transportation provided/wanted stability/didn't want young child to be with older kids in JK-8 school	3	less than 1	2
No help given for special problems, e.g. auditory, speech, behavioural, academic	3	less than 1	2

Type of Problem (cont'd)	Private (N=133) %	Separate (N=155) %	Total (N=288) %
Other:			
- Child unhappy/constantly picked on by other children/teased because he was slow			
- Peer pressure/achievers were belittled			
- No religious education			
- Split grades	8	6	7
- High dropout rates in secondary school			
- System in general			
- Parents not supportive of teachers			
- PTA too involved in what goes on in classroom			
- Child had difficulty understanding teacher with strong accent			

Gains Resulting from Transfer

Parents were asked what they thought their children had gained as a result of their move to a separate or private school. Eighty-eight percent of the parents stated that their children had benefitted in some way from the transfer to another school system. The balance of the parents indicated either that they were not aware of anything gained or that it was too soon to tell whether there were any benefits for their children.

As is indicated in Table 6, the five most frequently reported gains appear to be related to the parents' reasons for transferring their children. Forty-three percent of the total mentioned higher academic standards (with 75% of the junior level in the private school group noting this as a gain). Twenty-five percent believe there is better discipline. Twenty-one percent of the total (31% of the separate school group) feel their children are getting a Catholic or Christian education. Eighteen percent say their children have gained self confidence and 15% of the total (24% of the private and 7% of the separate school groups) say there are smaller classes and more individual attention.

Parents also perceive a number of other gains. Some believe their children are benefitting from their exposure to Hebrew studies; others think their children have better work habits, are benefitting from special programs, have better and more caring teachers, have better or earlier French programs, are happier, are exposed to a better set of values, or feel there is better teacher-parent communication.

TABLE 6

What do you think your child had gained as a result of the move to a separate/private school?	Private (N=133) %	Separate (N=155) %	Total (N=288) %
High academic standards and achievement/ stimulating program/motivation/more emphasis on basics/homework given and checked	51	37	43
Better discipline/manners/respect for teachers/dress code enforced/uniforms worn	20	29	25
Religious education - Christian, Catholic/catechism classes/religious environment (worship continues at school so there is continuity with home)/daily Bible Study/teachers with strong religious backgrounds/ creationist teaching	9	31	21
Self confidence/independence/sense of responsibility	20	17	18
Smaller classes/individualized programs/attention/extra help provided on a regular basis	24	7	15
No gains/too soon to tell	3	14	11
Better work habits	12	8	10
Hebrew culture/language/religion/ child has more time as she does not have to attend classes after school	21	-	10
Better learning environment/atmosphere/Christian spirit of loving and positiveness/more structure/ closed classroom/team spirit gives greater sense of being part of school	8	5	6
Availability of special programs, e.g. music, sports, enrichment, heritage languages (Armenian, Italian), broader extracurricular activities	9	2	5

Gains Resulting from the Move (cont'd)	Private (N=133) %	Separate (N=155) %	Total (N=288) %
Better teachers/more caring, patient, interested, responsible, open to new ideas	5	5	5
Better or earlier French program	2	8	5
Child happier/peers more compatible (have same religious background, are intellectual equals)/there is less exposure to problem children	5	1	3
Better sense of values/morals/ reinforcement of home values/better social attitude	2	5	3
Better teacher-parent communication	2	3	2
Other: - Won't have to attend junior high/ will avoid problems of junior high school, e.g. drugs - School is closer/provides lunch program - No exams - More competition - Special education needs met by especially trained staff - Child separated from other Russian speaking children/forced to learn English - Child repeated grade (not allowed in N.Y.) and now doing well	7	2	5

Losses Resulting from Transfer

Parents were also asked what they thought their children had lost as a result of their transfer to a separate or private school. Thirty-five percent of the parents indicated that their children had experienced some loss as a consequence of the transfer. Most parents said that they were not aware of any loss, and a small percentage felt that it was still too soon to judge.

As can be seen from Table 7, the loss of neighbourhood friends is cited most often (by 19% of the total - 28% of the private and 12% of the separate school groups); 13% think the quality and variety of non-academic activities and facilities are not as good as those in the North York system; and 5% are con-

cerned about the loss of leisure time resulting from the amount of time spent travelling to school.

TABLE 7

Is there anything your child may have lost as a result of the move?	Private (N=133) %	Separate (N=155) %	Total (N=288) %
No loss/too soon to tell	53	75	65
Has lost neighbourhood friends/no opportunity to mix with cross section of children from different backgrounds/school not co-ed. - misses mixture of boys and girls	28	12	19
Quality and variety of non-academic activities and facilities (music, physical education, sports, art, home economics, shops, fewer field trips, fewer extra-curricular activities)	16	10	13
Child has less leisure time because she/he has to travel greater distance to school	3	6	5
Close relationship with teacher/ teachers were friendlier and had more modern attitude	-	4	2
Child disturbed by disruption of change/lost a year	1	3	2
Other: - School is more traditional - There is not enough emphasis on secular education - Classes are too large - Has lost sense of independence gained from rotary system - No enrichment program available - Attending French school/not getting English instruction	11	4	5

Suggestions for Changes in the Public System

Parents were asked whether there were any changes they thought could be made in the North York system which would make them consider returning their children to public schools. Sixty-three percent of the parents made suggestions which have been detailed in Table 8. The most frequently mentioned suggestions have been grouped in categories. There was also a wide variety of other kinds of suggestions made by only one or two parents and these have been recorded under "Other".

The most commonly cited changes parents would like to see made also appear to be related to what they sought when they sent their children to other school systems. Twenty-six percent of the total would like better discipline; 20% would like to see academic standards raised (27% of the private school group); 13% want a Catholic or Christian education, especially catechism classes; and 11% (including 34% of the private school group) want improvement in quality of teaching and less disruption through constant staff movement.

TABLE 8

Are there any changes you think could be made in the North York system which would make you consider returning your child to a public school	Private (N=133) %	Separate (N=155) %	Total (N=288) %
No suggestions made for change	29	44	37
Establish better discipline/manners/ dress/respect/teacher authority/ stop profanity/bring back the strap	27	25	26
Raise academic standards/stimulate, motivate and demand more of children/ teach how to learn, think for themselves/allow progress at own level/ give and check homework/instil better study habits	27	15	20
Provide religious education/optional religious classes/catechism classes/ morning prayers/teach creationism	7	18	13
Improve quality of teaching/need teachers who are more caring, dedicated, interesting/need more male teachers/ should be more concern for children than administration/too many teachers being fired/too much staff movement/ need fresh blood/find new ways to evaluate teachers so not only beginners are let go	34	6	11

Suggestions for Changes (cont'd)	Private (N=133) %	Separate (N=155) %	Total (N=288) %
Have smaller classes/lower PTR/more teachers, fewer administrators/more individual attention	14	6	9
Need more structure/less wasted time/ fewer frills/fewer field trips	8	5	6
Abolish open classrooms	8	3	6
Eliminate junior high system/prefer K-8	3	7	5
Provide more help for special education children/full day program needed for perceptually handicapped/need better assessment program/need better training for special education teachers	4	1	2
Other:			
- Reopen local school/school closings are upsetting and create instability for child/don't like busing			
- Introduce French in earlier grades/ give more French instruction			
- Teach more languages in lower grades			
- Abolish split grades	27	15	18
- Provide better guidance			
- Offer courses in values, nutrition			
- Abolish team teaching			
- Teach Hebrew			
- Stop pandering to other cultures/ they should learn to accept our cultures and values			
- Should be more competition to encourage greater effort			
- Change reporting system from anecdodotal to comparative measure			
- Instil better school spirit so children feel involved			
- Concentrate on academic program/ parents can do field trips, etc.			
- Need better communication between school and parents/need to hear about problems earlier			
- Encourage more parental involvement at school			
- Have fewer PD days			

Suggestions for Changes (cont'd)	Private (N=133) %	Separate (N=155) %	Total (N=288) %
Other: (cont'd)			
- Stop the rapid changes in curriculum			
- Admit child to School for Talented			
- Have greater accountability up the line from teacher to Assistant Superintendent			
- Do something about dropouts			
- Have special classes for immigrant children with language problems			
- Better coordination of program between junior and senior high schools			
- Offer ethnic programs on Saturday			
- Amalgamate public, private and separate schools into one system			
- Close inefficient schools (poor teachers)			

Additional Comments

As a final question, parents were asked if there was anything they would like to add to what they had already said. Most of them repeated or elaborated on what they had said previously, but some provided further insights about their reasons for transferring their children out of North York public schools and some spoke about other aspects of education or about the survey itself. A number of typical comments are listed below:

- Really didn't want to change but public school closed. Re-open the public school and we would return our child.

- My children insisted on going to separate school because all their friends went there.

- I was pleased with public school but my husband died and I felt the children needed strong religious support.

- Public school is good but husband, who is Greek, feels a private school education is a good investment for the future.

- Our family has been here only one year from Russia. We were told that private schools offer better education.

- My older child was moved because of a discipline problem and I was told I couldn't separate my children. Would have preferred to enrol child in French Immersion school.

- We had one son who could not cope with the high pressure at the parochial school so transferred him back to the public system so it really depends on the individual child although we were sorry that he was losing the cultural education at the Hebrew school.

- There is too much racial conflict among children.

- My daughter used to get infested with lice every year - that doesn't happen here.

- Am opposed to teaching of evolution thecry.

- I attended public school and didn't like it. I want my daughter to have a better education and to learn French.

- Unhappy that I have to pay extra to provide an acceptable education for my child.

- Tax dollars should follow child.

- I am pleased that the Board is trying to correct the problems. We would be back in 24 hours if changes occur.

- I suggest you add a question to this survey as to whether both parents agreed on sending the child to a private school. I feel my wife would have answered differently. Also I went through the public school system and survived. I really don't see anything wrong with it.

- It's too late now - even if it has cost me money and sacrifice I wouldn't change their school. Care, dedication and conviction are important in the schools.

- Would not return child to public school. She is tremendously happy and her academic level has increased so much she is a changed child.

- Most suggestions for change are costly so don't anticipate they will be implemented, e.g. smaller classes, full French program.

SUMMARY

1. A total of 306 parents were interviewed.

2. In the primary grades, the largest proportion of children were withdrawn from North York public schools at the SK level (42%):

   . the majority (59%) of withdrawals to private schools was from the SK level
   . the movement to separate schools was more evenly distributed over the grades, with slightly more than half leaving from SK and grade 1 combined

   In the junior grades, the greatest proportion of withdrawals took place at grade 6 (43%):

   . in the private school group the largest percentages withdrew from grade 6 (53%) and grade 4 (32%)
   . in the separate school group about one-third were withdrawn at each of grades 4, 5 and 6

3. The following are the most common reasons given by parents for transferring their children from North York public schools to either private or separate schools:

	Private	Separate
. Preferred that child have a Catholic or Christian education - Many of the parents who chose private parochial schools identified themselves as Seventh Day Adventists.	10%	45%
. Wanted higher academic standards - This was a more frequent reason for private school attendance, especially for bright children in the junior grades, with parents electing to send them to schools such as the University of Toronto Schools and the Toronto French School.	45%	9%
. Wanted better discipline - Though this was generally more commonly cited by private school parents, it was also considered an important reason by the separate school parents of junior grade children in the area east of Yonge Street.	27%	17%

	Private	Separate
. Concerned about closing of neighbourhood schools - The movement to separate schools, as a consequence of school closings, was most evident at the primary level in the area west of Yonge Street.	7%	25%
. Wanted child to study Hebrew culture, language and religion - This represented one-third of those opting for private schools, with most movement taking place at the primary levels in both the eastern and western areas.	32%	-
. Preferred smaller classes/more individual attention	10%	6%
. Did not want child to attend junior high school	7%	13%

4. A total of 18 of the 306 (6%) parents (13 private, 5 separate) had returned their children to North York schools mainly because they found that the other schools had not lived up to their expectations, that the tuition fees for private schools were too expensive, or that their children had difficulty in adjusting to the new school.

5. Only 27 of the parents (9%) (13 private, 14 separate) had considered alternatives other than the school they chose. Among these parents:

   . private school parents had considered a number of alternatives, including separate schools, other public schools, other private schools, French Immersion schools and a school for the deaf

   . only two alternatives were mentioned by separate school parents, namely private or private parochial schools, and most of them had considered only the private school

6. A total of 48% of the parents said there were problems in North York Schools which influenced their decision to transfer their children to another school system. This represented 57% of the private school group (especially at the junior levels, where 79% of parents said there were problems) and 39% of the separate school group. Among the most frequently mentioned problems were:

   . lack of discipline, which was reported by 28% of separate and 23% of private school parents

   . inadequate academic standards which was reported by 26% of private and 11% of separate school parents

   . large classes and lack of individual attention which was reported by 12% of private and 8% of separate school parents

7. Eighty-nine percent of the parents believe their children have gained something from the transfer to another system. This represents 97% of the private school and 86% of the separate school parents. The most frequently mentioned gains were:

	Private	Separate
Higher academic standards	51%	37%
Better discipline	20%	29%
Catholic or Christian education	9%	31%
Improved self concept	20%	17%
Smaller classes/more individual attention	24%	7%
Improved work habits	12%	8%
Hebrew studies	21%	-

8. Thirty-five percent of parents feel that their children have experienced some loss as a consequence of the transfer to another system. This represents 47% of private school parents and 25% of separate school parents.

   . 28% of private and 12% of separate school parents say their children no longer have friends in the neighbourhood

   . 16% of private and 10% of separate school parents believe that the quality and variety of non-academic activities and facilities are not as good as those of North York

9. Sixty-three percent of the parents had suggestions for changes which might make them consider returning their children to the North York system. This represented 71% of private and 56% of separate school parents. The changes mentioned most frequently were:

	Private	Separate
Better discipline	27%	25%
Higher academic standards	27%	15%
Provision of Catholic or Christian education at least on an optional basis	7%	18%
Better teachers/less staff movement	34%	6%
Smaller classes/more individual attention	14%	6%

PART II

PUPILS ADMITTED TO NORTH YORK PUBLIC SCHOOLS FROM SEPARATE AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

METHOD

It was decided to obtain information from parents of children who transferred to North York public schools from either separate or private schools by means of a mailed questionnaire. As the subject of admissions to North York schools is less sensitive than that of withdrawals, it was felt that parents would be comfortable with a written survey.

Development of Questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed, based on discussions with several elementary school principals and some members of senior staff. Questions were designed to determine why parents had transferred their children to North York schools, whether parents felt there were any difficulties in the private or separate schools their children had attended previously, what gains or losses their children had experienced as a result of the transfer, whether or not they intended to keep their children in the North York system, and what suggestions they had for changes which would make the public system more appealing to them.

The questionnaire was vetted with the Board's supervisory officers and suggestions for revisions were incorporated in the final version (see Appendix C).

Sample

The entire population of parents whose children were admitted to a North York elementary school between June 1 and October 15, 1980, after attending either a separate or private school, were surveyed. This period was chosen to ensure that the children would have had a full year's experience in North York schools at the time of the survey.

Data Collection

The questionnaires were mailed on October 14, 1981, to 316 parents with the request that the completed questionnaires be returned by October 26. A total of 86 questionnaires (27%) were returned. Of these, 16 parents indicated that their children had never left the North York system or had never attended a North York school. The findings reported, therefore, are based on the responses of 70 parents.

It should be borne in mind when reading the findings in this section that the return rate of 27% of the questionnaires is not very high. Though the information provided by the parents who completed the questionnaire may reflect what

many parents think, the return rate is too small to extrapolate with statistical accuracy to those who did not respond.

Generally, the data collected by means of this survey has been reported for the total group of respondents as there were few between-group differences in responses when they were examined in terms of grade level or geographical area. Where there were any differences worth noting, however, these have been reported. Finally, because this questionnaire did not enquire as to the kind of school system children had attended previously, no distinction has been made between responses from parents whose children transferred from separate as opposed to private schools.

FINDINGS

Present Grade of Children of Respondents

Parents were asked what grade level their children were in at the time of the survey. As is shown in Table 9 below, the 70 respondents indicated they had a total of 77 children attending North York schools as of September 30, 1980. Fifty-five percent were in the primary grades, 42% were in the junior grades and there was no indication of grade level for the other 3%. An examination of the data for the individual grades reveals that the largest percentages of children were in grade 2 (29%) and grade 5 (15%).

TABLE 9

Present Grade	N=77 %
SK	4
1	10
2	29
3	12
4	11
5	15
6	11
7	5
Not indicated	3

Reasons for Transfer

Parents were asked to list the most important considerations in their decision to send their children to North York schools.

As indicated in Table 10, the most common reasons given by parents for transferring their children concerned a preference for the neighbourhood school and for a better academic program. Forty-three percent said they preferred schools closer to home (this was particularly true for the primary grades, and for the

area west of Yonge); 34% wanted a better academic program; 21% cited cost as a reason; 19% wanted access to special programs such as special education, French Immersion and gifted; 11% preferred to have their children be part of the local community; and 3% were interested in having access to day care before and after school.

TABLE 10

What were the most important considerations in your decision to send your child to a North York school?	N=70 %
Accessibility of local school, e.g. public school close to home/ other school too far away/moved into area	43
Better quality of academic program and teaching, e.g. smaller classes/individual attention/better able to motivate child/ local school has good reputation/moved child out of local school because felt it was bad for children; that school now closed and children attending much better North York school/ closed classroom	34
Cost, e.g. private school too expensive	21
Availability of special programs, e.g. special education, French Immersion, gifted, Seneca gymnastics/kindergarten/full day program to absorb child's energy	19
Concern about meeting affective needs of child, e.g. child's self concept was suffering/other school was too structured or pressured/North York school is more concerned with children's needs/child is happier and learning better in public school	17
Felt child should be part of the local community, e.g. have friends in the neighbourhood/be exposed to multicultural and multilingual aspect of the community	11
Availability of day care before and after school	3
Other, e.g. parents attended North York schools/this is just interim transfer till child is admitted to another private school which can deal with behaviourial problem/always intended for child to attend public school after kindergarten	4

Difficulties Perceived in Private and Separate Schools

Parents were asked if there were any difficulties in the private or separate school which influenced their decision to transfer to a North York school. Forty-six percent of the parents stated that they were unhappy with some aspect of the educational system their children had attended previously, 36% had no complaints about these systems, and 18% did not reply to this question.

As is indicated in Table 11 below, 11% of all parents were concerned that there was too much emphasis on the academic program, with not enough time given to non-academic activities; 10% said the school was too far away; 9% were troubled by high tuition fees; 9% said their children were having difficulty academically; and another 9% felt their children's self concept had suffered. Other difficulties parents mentioned included: not enough emphasis on academics; lack of neighbourhood friends; unmet special needs; lack of communication between school and parents; and overcrowding.

TABLE 11

Were there any difficulties in the private/separate school which influenced your decision to transfer to a North York School? If YES, please elaborate.	N=70 %
No difficulties reported/no response	54
Too much emphasis on academics/no time for anything but study/ not enough physical activity/no facilities for sports, extra-curricular activities/too pressured/too much competition	11
Distance/school was too far/transportation was difficult/buses were crowded	10
Cost/school was too expensive	9
Child's self concept suffered/not happy in school/not happy with teacher	9
Child had difficulty academically/had difficulty coping with two languages	9
Too much religion/school interfered with parental upbringing of children/Christian school fell short of ideals of Christian education, mistaking 'skills' and 'discipline' for its essence	6
Not enough emphasis on academics or scholarship/school too casual/ child needed more structure/child unable to cope with self motivation	6
Unhappy about lack of neighbourhood friends/separation of school from community	4
Special needs not met/child needed help with speech problem/ needed special attention in small group	4
Lack of communication between school and parents	3
School was overcrowded/large classes/little individual attention	3
Disliked 'political' bias of Quebec staff at school	1

Gains Resulting from Transfer

Asked what they thought their children had gained as a result of the transfer into North York, parents responded as indicated in Table 12. Eighty-four percent of the parents reported some gain. The four most frequently mentioned gains would indicate that transfers to North York schools may have provided solutions to some of the difficulties that parents were concerned about regarding their children's attendance in private or separate schools. Forty-one percent of the parents believe their children's self concept and confidence have improved; 24% said the children have made friends locally and now have a chance to mix with children of different backgrounds; 20% think the academic program is better; and 17% appreciate the reduction in travel time. There is also a feeling that the learning environment is better, the physical education programs and facilities are superior, French instruction is better, and that children are getting help with their special needs. Nine percent of respondents said it was too soon to know whether there has been any gain or loss, and 7% feel their children have not gained anything or that it was a mistake to transfer their children.

TABLE 12

What do you think your child has gained as a result of this move?	N=70 %
Child is more confident/happier/relaxed/enjoys school more/ enjoys learning again/there is less presure/child has better relationship with teacher	41
Child has made friends in the neighbourhood/has a chance to mix with children of other ethnic groups/has more community awareness	24
Good academic program/access to richer learning resources/ intellectual stimulation/school work has improved	20
Travel time reduced/child has more time for other activities/ likes independence of walking to school alone/has chance to come home at lunch, spends more time with the family	17
More child-centred learning environment/school fun, interesting and challenging/more individual attention/child has more time for self/enjoys more freedom	9
Too soon to know if there is either gain or loss	9
Gained nothing/made mistake in moving child/local school did not live up to reputation	7
Better physical education program and facilities, e.g. gymnastics/child in better physical health	6

Gains Resulting from the Move (cont'd)	N=70 %
French instruction	4
Getting help with special needs, e.g. emotional problems, perceptual handicap, remedial reading	3
Benefits of kindergarten program/full day program harnesses child's energies	3
Good school communication with parents	1
Excellent teachers	1

Losses Resulting from Transfer

Parents were also asked if there was anything they thought their children had lost as a consequence of the move. As is indicated in Table 13, 51% of the respondents said they were not aware of anything that their children had lost as a result of the move. On the other hand, 14% feel that the lack of religious teaching in school is a loss; 13% perceive a drop in academic standards and challenge; 10% feel there has been a loss in self discipline or good and independent work habits; and 8% regret that their children are no longer involved in Hebrew studies. Other parents said their children no longer have small classes or as much individual attention; that discipline is not as good; and that their children have lost friends, self confidence, or a love of learning.

TABLE 13

Is there anything your child has lost as a result of the move?	N=70 %
Not aware of anything	51
Religious teaching	14
Higher academic expectations and standards/there is no creative or intellectual challenge in public school/slower progress in basic skills/loss of skills, e.g. reading/lack of depth in environmental studies	13
Self discipline/good and independent work habits	10
Benefit of Hebrew studies	8
Smaller classes/individual attention	7

Losses Resulting from the Move (cont'd)	N=70 %
Discipline/good manners/politeness	6
Some friends	4
Self worth/confidence	3
Love of learning/has lost all interest in school	3
Early exposure to French	3
Other: - Transportation in winter months - Good communication between teacher and parent - Open concept and informal student-teacher relationship - Specialized physical education instruction - A great deal will be lost if public school closes in two years as planned	7

Intention to Keep Child in Public System

Parents were asked whether or not they were planning to keep their children in the North York system and to explain their reasons if they intended to withdraw their children. Eighty-four percent of the parents said they intended to keep their children in North York public schools while 12% said they would not and 4% said they were undecided.

A total of eight parents said that they intended to transfer their children out of North York. When asked to explain why, they gave the reasons listed in Table 14.

TABLE 14

Reasons for not keeping children in North York system	Frequency #
Lack of academic standards and achievement/insufficient emphasis on basic skills/frivolous environmental studies program	5
Lack of discipline/bad language used in school	5
Wants other language program for child, e.g. Hebrew, French	2
Lack of organized athletic program	1
Lack of enriched music and art program	1

Reasons for not keeping children in North York system (cont'd)	Frequency
No longer need day care facilities	1
Have moved out of North York	1

Only one parent of the few who were undecided about whether to keep their children in North York schools gave any indication of why, stating that she was not happy with the large class size and the lack of individual instruction and felt that not enough time was being given to basic skills, particularly reading and mathematics.

Two respondents said that, despite the fact that they are unhappy with North York schools, they would not remove their children at present. One of these parents expressed her reasons quite bluntly: "We are keeping our child there only because of his friends and the cost of a private school, not because we feel he is getting a good education".

Suggestions for Changes in the Public System

The responses to the question of whether there are any changes that could be made in North York schools which would make them more appealing to parents are detailed in Table 15. The changes parents mentioned most frequently are related to improving academic standards and curriculum. Twelve parents (17% of the total) felt this would make North York schools more appealing. Among the other changes parents would like to see: 7% would prefer smaller classes; 7% feel there is a need for more effective and professional teachers; and 5% would like better discipline. There also were a number of other suggestions made which ranged from providing transportation for French Immersion students to getting better press coverage for public education.

TABLE 15

Are there any changes that could be made in North York schools which would make them more appealing to you?	N=70 %
Raise academic standards, e.g. place more emphasis on teaching of basic skills/eliminate busy work (SRA kits, workbooks) and give more writing practice/curriculum should have a more global approach, e.g. world history, geography/teach more literature, grammar/provide Family Studies at lower grade levels/give more homework/establish better work habits	17
Provide smaller classes	7
More effective teachers/greater professionalism among teachers/ teachers should be trained not only academically but in how to deal with children and parents effectively/should be screened for ability to relate to children	7

Suggestions for Changes (cont'd)	N=70 %
Provide transportation for French Immersion students especially in winter	5
Better discipline/parents should not have to assume responsibility for child's behaviour during school hours	5
Provide special school for gifted children/more challenging program for brighter students/develop creativity	5
Abolish open plan/not suitable for child/too noisy	4
Better and more frequent communication between teachers and parents/more opportunity for parents to be involved in school activities with their children	4
After school religious studies	4
Day care before and after school for working parents	4
Very happy with educational system/child contented, stimulated	4
Provide school program on P.D. days to accommodate working parents/there are too many holidays - statutory and Jewish	3
Keep local school open/new school will be too far/afraid new school will be overcrowded	3
Other: - More emphasis on competitive spirit - Provide tutorials at lunch time or after school for children needing extra help - Upgrade lunch program/allow children to buy milk before and after school - Teach English after grade 4 in French Immersion program - School yard could be kept cleaner - Ensure that children have necessary textbooks so they can get work done - Get more positive press coverage	6

Additional Comments

Asked if they had any other comments they would like to make, many respondents elaborated on what they had said earlier. The largest number of comments were related to academic concerns, a number were laudatory of the North York system, several were concerned with the school climate and administration, others were about the survey itself, and some were general in nature.

The following are representative of the types of comments made:

- I am very happy with the North York school system and feel that my daughter is receiving a good education. She has been fortunate to have had very caring teachers.

- Overall, we are happy with the French Immersion programme.

- As soon as our son entered the school, certain problems were observed and acted upon. I was very pleased with the resources available (i.e. S.A.P. program).

- The private school could not diagnose my child's perceptual problem. The North York school has worked with Sick Kids to do something.

- The new principal is an excellent administrator in addition to being good with the children. The communication between parents and teachers is always open. This was not the case with the former administration.

- I feel my grade 5 son is gradually becoming "turned off". The change perhaps was a mistake. The teachers seem in many ways incompetent in dealing with kids. How about some Teacher Effectiveness Training a la Tom Gordon?!! Even my grade 2 child is less enthusiastic this year.

- The children in the public system seem to be behind the children in the separate school system in reading, writing and arithmetic skills.

- Private schools teach twice as much in half a day as the public schools do all day. There is no reason why the public schools with their better qualified teachers cannot increase their standards in a full day of teaching, with smaller classes.

- We are not happy with our child's program or total learning environment and we feel helpless to effect change. My attempts to ask questions were met with vague responses that reflected educational jargon - really non-answers - that protect the system.

- Classes at my son's school are split grades and too large. He requires a lot of individual attention and needs to be in a small class.

- As I am sure many people move around in Metro Toronto I feel some effort should be made to keep the educational systems on par (Scarborough, Toronto, North York, etc.). It took my daughter the whole year to reach the level of the other children in class. This was only grade 2. I'm sure in the higher grades it could prove very detrimental to a child.

- In the early years, the private school met our needs in that J.K. and K. were all day. I am a working mother and felt that this was better than a babysitter.

- We are grateful for the opportunity given to our child but we feel that the tax dollar <u>should</u> follow the child. We would prefer a Christian education but our child needs special education program.

- The public school system has a poor public image which encourages parents who are not happy with other systems to keep them there anyway.

- As your covering memo did not state specifically the aims of the survey, I would be interested in learning what you intend to do with the results of this survey.

SUMMARY

1. A total of 316 questionnaires were distributed to parents who had admitted their children to North York public schools from separate or private schools. Of these, 70 were returned by parents whose children were still attending North York schools.

2. The most frequently cited reasons for transferring children to North York were that:

   - 43% preferred a school closer to home
   - 34% were seeking better academic programs and teachers
   - 21% were concerned with the high cost of private schools
   - 19% felt their children needed special programs
   - 17% were concerned that the affective needs of their children were not being met
   - 11% wanted their children to be part of the local community

3. Almost half of the parents (46%) said there were difficulties in the school system their children had left:

   - 11% of all parents felt there was too much emphasis on academics
   - 10% thought the school was too far from home
   - 9% were concerned with the high cost of tuition
   - 9% felt their children's self concept had suffered
   - 9% said their children were having trouble academically

4. Most parents (84%) felt that their children had gained in a number of ways from the transfer:

   - 41% felt there was a gain in self concept
   - 24% said their children have made friends locally
   - 20% believe the academic program is better
   - 17% said their children have more time as they don't have to travel so far to school

5. Slightly more than half of the parents (51%) felt their children had not lost anything as a consequence of the transfer:

   - 14% felt that the lack of religious education was a loss
   - 13% said there has been a drop in academic standards and challenge
   - 10% believe their children are not as self disciplined and that their work habits are not as good

6. Most of the parents (84%) plan to keep their children in North York. Low academic standards and achievement and lack of discipline were the two most commonly cited reasons given by the few who intend to withdraw their children.

7. The changes parents would like which could make North York schools more appealing to them are mostly related to improvements in academic standards and curriculum. They would also like smaller classes, more effective teachers and better discipline.

APPENDIX A

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW - PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN TRANSFERRED

FROM NORTH YORK TO SEPARATE OR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND OF CHILD (to be completed by interviewer)

Name: _____

Now attending: Private School [ ] Separate School [ ]

Location of last school child attended in North York:

East of Yonge [ ] West of Yonge [ ]

Grade level at time of withdrawal:

JK [ ] SK [ ] Gr. 1 [ ] Gr. 2 [ ] Gr. 3 [ ]

Gr. 4 [ ] Gr. 5 [ ] Gr. 6 [ ]

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

- Hello, is this Mr./Mrs. _____?

- This is _____ of the North York Board of Education. We're conducting a survey of parents to find out why their children have left the public school system to go to separate or private schools.

- Would you mind taking about 10 minutes now to answer a few questions? Any information you provide will be treated both anonymously and confidentially.

IF RESPONDENT SAYS IT IS NOT CONVENIENT NOW, ASK: Would it be convenient to call at another time? _____ IF YES, ASK: When? _____
Thank you. I'll call back then.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS - PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN TRANSFERRED

FROM NORTH YORK SCHOOLS TO SEPARATE OR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

1. We understand that your child attended a separate/private school last year. Is this correct?

YES [ ] If YES, go on to question 2.

NO [ ] If NO, say: Sorry that our information isn't right. What school did your child attend?

_____

We'll see that our records are corrected. Thank you very much. Goodbye.

2. (a) Is your child still attending a separate/private school?

YES [ ] If YES, go on to question 3 (next page)

NO [ ] If NO, complete (b) and (c) and end interview.

(b) What were the most important considerations in your original decision to transfer your child to a separate/private school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(c) What were your reasons for reversing this decision and re-admitting your child to the public system?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

- Thank you very much for your help. I'd like to reassure you that the information you've provided will remain anonymous. Goodbye.

3. Was this the only alternative that you considered?

YES [ ]

NO [ ] If NO, ask: What other kinds of schools did you consider?

Private [ ] Separate [ ]

Private parochial [ ] Other [ ]

_____

4. What were the most important considerations in your decision to transfer your child to a separate/private school?

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5. Were there any problems in the North York schools which influenced your decision to transfer your child?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

If YES, ask: Would you please explain what they were?

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6. What do you think your child has gained as a result of the move to a separate/private school?

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7. Is there anything you think your child may have lost as a result of the move?

8. Are there any changes you think could be made in the North York system which would make you consider returning your child to a public school?

That's all I have to ask. Is there anything that you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your help. I'd like to reassure you that the information you've provided will remain confidential. Goodbye.

APPENDIX B

TABLE 2

What were the most important considerations in your decision to transfer your child to a Separate/Private School?	PRIVATE							SEPARATE							Total (N=306) %
	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Private (N=146) %	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Separate (N=160) %	
	East (N=38) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=78) %	East (N=40) %	West (N=28) %	Total (N=68) %		East (N=40) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=80) %	East (N=40) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=80) %		
Wanted child to have a Christian religious education/ preferred availability of communion and catechism classes so child did not have to attend weekend classes.	-	23	12	3	14	7	10	52	58	55	38	33	35	45	28
Higher academic standards/more challenging curriculum and environment/more emphasis on basics/development of better working habits/homework given.	26	18	22	88	50	72	45	8	10	9	10	8	9	9	26
Better discipline/dress/particularly at junior high level.	16	18	17	35	21	29	27	18	13	15	30	8	19	17	20
Neighbourhood school closed/wanted stability/afraid transfer school would also close/public school too far/ didn't want child bused/transfer school French immersion- afraid English skills would be weak/didn't like exposure to older children in JK-9 setting.	3	5	4	8	14	10	7	10	58	34	13	20	16	25	16
Wanted child to learn Hebrew language/culture/religion.	53	53	53	25	18	9	32	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
Smaller classes/more individual attention/child needed extra assistance.	13	5	9	10	14	12	10	3	-	1	8	15	11	6	8

TABLE 2

Reasons for transfer (cont'd)	PRIVATE							SEPARATE							Total (N=306) %
	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Private (N=146)	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Separate (N=160)	
	East (N=38) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=78) %	East (N=40) %	West (N=28) %	Total (N=68) %	%	East (N=40) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=80) %	East (N=40) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=80) %	%	%
Didn't want child to attend junior high/junior high has bad reputation e.g. drug problem/prefer continuity of K-8 program	-	-	-	8	25	15	7	-	-	-	8	18	13	6	7
Prefer traditional learning environment/don't like open plan/wanted school to have stricter control over learning.	26	3	14	5	4	4	10	3	3	3	5	3	4	3	6
Not satisfied with the quality of teaching/teacher-child relationship.	-	-	-	15	4	10	5	5	5	5	5	8	6	6	5
Convenience for working parent/lunch provided/closer to baby sitter/longer day/day long French immersion available at JK level/availability of after school activities.	3	-	1	3	4	3	4	5	-	3	-	8	4	6	3
Wanted child to have better French program/ to become multilingual.	3	3	3	5	-	3	3	5	-	3	3	3	3	3	3
Always intended to have child attend private school/ family tradition.	-	-	-	15	4	10	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

Reasons for Transfer

TABLE 2

Reasons for transfer (cont'd)	PRIVATE							SEPARATE							Total (N=306) %
	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Private (N=146) %	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Separate (N=160) %	
	East (N=38) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=78) %	East (N=40) %	West (N=28) %	Total (N=68) %		East (N=40) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=80) %	East (N=40) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=80) %		
Other children in family attending separate or private school (if separate, required to transfer all children).	3	-	1	-	-	-	1	8	5	6	3	-	1	4	2
Frustrated because unable to get help for child's special needs (speech, auditory, learning disability, emotional and social behaviour problems).	-	-	-	3	7	4	2	3	-	1	-	3	1	1	2
Other - Poor communication between teacher-parent/school-parent - Not satisfied with child's academic performance - Lack of leadership in school - Didn't like reporting system as never knew how child was doing in relation to others - Felt Canadian born child was held back because school caters to language needs of immigrant children - Didn't like split grades - Wanted music program at St. Michael's College School	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	4

TABLE 5

Were there any problems in the North York schools which influenced your decision to transfer your child? If Yes, please explain what they were.	PRIVATE							SEPARATE							Total (N=288) %
	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Private (N=133) %	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Separate (N=155) %	
	East (N=34) %	West (N=38) %	Total (N=72) %	East (N=37) %	West (N=24) %	Total (N=61) %		East (N=39) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=79) %	East (N=38) %	West (N=38) %	Total (N=76) %		
YES	47	37	42	76	83	79	57	56	13	34	53	34	43	39	48
NO	53	63	58	24	17	21	43	44	87	66	47	66	57	61	52
Lack of discipline/too much freedom/lack of respect/ poor moral behaviour, e.g. swearing	12	5	8	51	21	39	23	33	8	20	34	21	28	24	23
Academic standards not high enough/curriculum not stimulating/not engough emphasis on basics/child bored/ unmotivated/too many frills/no homework.	21	21	21	41	21	33	26	5	5	5	16	5	11	8	16
Classes too large/individual needs not met.	9	3	6	19	21	20	12	15	8	11	11	5	8	10	11
Not satisfied with quality of teaching/teachers incompetent/prejudiced/unprofessional in behaviour/ lack warmth/have no personal interest in children.	9	3	6	22	13	18	11	3	3	3	5	3	4	3	7
Don't like junior high school/has bad reputation/has drug problem/is too large/don't like rotary system.	-	-	-	8	29	16	8	5	3	4	8	-	4	4	6

TABLE 5

Problems (cont'd)	PRIVATE							SEPARATE							Total (N=288) %
	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Private	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Separate	
	East (N=34) %	West (N=38) %	Total (N=72) %	East (N=37) %	West (N=24) %	Total (N=61) %	(N=133) %	East (N=39) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=70) %	East (N=38) %	West (N=38) %	Total (N=76) %	(N=155) %	
Poor communication between teacher-parents/principal-parents/school-parents/school indifferent to child's problems/did not communicate with parents about problems.	3	3	3	11	-	7	5	8	5	6	5	3	4	5	5
Don't like open classrooms/not suitable for child.	11	-	6	-	-	-	3	10	-	5	-	-	-	3	3
Neighbourhood school closed/too far for young child to walk/no transportation provided/wanted stability/didn't want young child to be with older kids in JK-8 school	3	3	3	8	-	5	3	-	-	-	-	3	1	less than 1	2
No help given for special problems e.g. auditory, speech, behavioural, academic.	6	-	3	3	4	4	3	-	-	-	-	3	1	less than 1	2
Other - child unhappy/constantly picked on by other children/ teased because he was slow - peer pressure/achievers were belittled - no religious education - inadequate early French program - split grades - high dropout rates in secondary school - system in general - child had difficulty understanding teacher with strong accent - parents not supportive of teachers - PTA too involved in what goes on in classroom							8							6	7

TABLE 6

What do you think your child had gained as a result of the move to a separate/private school?	PRIVATE							SEPARATE							Total (N=288) %
	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Private (N=133) %	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Separate (N= 155) %	
	East (N=34) %	West (N=38) %	Total (N=72) %	East (N=37) %	West (N=24) %	Total (N=61) %		East (N=39) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N= 79) %	East (N= 38) %	West (N= 38) %	Total (N= 76) %		
High academic standards and achievement/stimulating program/motivation/more emphasis on basics/homework given and checked.	29	32	31	84	63	75	51	36	18	27	39	55	47	37	43
Better discipline/manners/respect for teachers/dress code enforced/uniforms worn.	15	13	14	32	21	29	20	44	8	25	32	34	33	29	25
Religious education - Christian, Catholic/Catechism classes/religious environment (worship continues at school so there is continuity with home)/daily Bible Study/teachers with strong religious backgrounds/ creationist teaching.	29	21	13	-	13	5	9	56	33	44	11	24	17	31	21
Self confidence/independence/sense of responsibility.	15	3	8	32	25	30	20	18	5	11	24	24	24	17	18
Smaller classes/individualized programs/attention/ extra help provided on a regular basis.	18	18	18	5	70	31	24	13	3	8	5	8	7	7	15
Better work habits.	9	11	10	16	13	15	12	13	-	6	13	8	11	8	10

TABLE 6

Gains (cont'd)	PRIVATE							SEPARATE							Total (N=288) %
	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Private (N=133)	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Separate (N=155)	
	East (N=34) %	West (N=38) %	Total (N=72) %	East (N=37) %	West (N=24) %	Total (N=61) %	%	East (N=39) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=79) %	East (N=38) %	West (N=38) %	Total (N=76) %	%	
Hebrew culture/language/religion/child has more time as she does not have to attend classes after school.	28	37	36	3	4	3	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Better learning environment/atmosphere/Christian spirit of loving and positiveness/more structure/ closed classroom/team spirit gives sense of being part of school.	9	5	6	11	8	10	8	3	5	4	8	3	5	5	6
Availability of special programs, e.g. music, sports, enrichment, heritage languages (Armenian, Italian) broader extracurricular activities.	6	3	4	14	17	15	9	3	-	1	3	3	3	2	5
Better teachers/more caring, patient, interested, responsible, open to new ideas.	-	5	3	5	13	8	5	7	3	5	3	5	4	5	5
Better or earlier French program.	3	3	3	-	-	-	2	13	3	8	13	3	8	8	5
Child happier/peers more compatible (have same religious background, are intellectual equals) there is less exposure to problem children.	-	5	3	-	17	7	5	5	-	3	-	-	-	1	3

TABLE 6

Gains (cont'd)	PRIVATE							SEPARATE							Total (N=288) %
	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Private (N=133) %	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Separate (N=155) %	
	East (N=34) %	West (N=38) %	Total (N=72) %	East (N=37) %	West (N=24) %	Total (N=61) %		East (N=39) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=79) %	East (N=38) %	West (N=38) %	Total (N=76) %		
Better sense of values/morals/reinforcement of home values/better social attitude.	3	-	1	-	4	2	2	3	-	1	13	3	8	5	3
Better teacher-parent communication.	-	3	1	3	4	3	2	5	3	4	3	-	1	3	2
Other - won't have to attend junior high/will avoid problems of junior high school e.g. drugs - school is closer/provides lunch program - no exams - more competition - special education needs met by especially trained staff - child separated from other Russian speaking children/ forced to learn English - child repeated grade (not allowed in N.Y.) and now doing well							7							2	5

TABLE 7

Is there anything your child may have lost as a result of the move?	PRIVATE							SEPARATE							Total (N= 288) %
	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Private (N=133) %	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Separate (N=155) %	
	East (N= 34) %	West (N= 38) %	Total (N= 72) %	East (N=37) %	West (N=24) %	Total (N=61) %		East (N=39) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=79) %	East (N=38) %	West (N=38) %	Total (N= 76) %		
Has lost neighbourhood friends/no opportunity to mix with cross section of children from different backgrounds/school not coed. - misses mixture of boys and girls.	44	13	28	32	20	28	28	23	3	13	16	8	12	12	19
Quality and variety of non-academic activities and facilities (music, physical education, sports, art, home economics, shops)/fewer field trips, fewer extra-curricular activities.	24	16	19	3	25	11	16	23	3	13	11	5	8	10	13
Child has less leisure time because she/he has to travel greater distance to school.	9	3	6	-	-	-	3	13	3	8	3	5	4	6	5
Close relationship with teacher/teachers were friendlier and had more modern attitude.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	-	5	3	4	2
Child disturbed by disruption of change/lost a year.	-	-	-	-	4	2	1	5	-	3	3	5	4	3	2
Other - School is more traditional - There is not enough emphasis on secular education - Classes are too large - Has lost sense of independence gained from rotary system - No enrichment program available - Attending French school/not getting English instruction - Parents get no benefit from tax dollar - too much pressure							11							4	5

TABLE 8

Are there any changes you think could be made in the North York system which would make you consider returning your child to a public school?	PRIVATE							SEPARATE							Total (N=288) %
	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Private (N=133) %	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Separate (N=155) %	
	East (N=34) %	West (N=38) %	Total (N=72) %	East (N=37) %	West (N=24) %	Total (N=61) %		East (N=39) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=79) %	East (N=38) %	West (N=38) %	Total (N=76) %		
Establish better discipline/manners/dress/respect/ teacher authority/stop profanity/bring back the strap.	24	-	11	62	21	46	27	26	8	16	34	32	33	25	26
Raise academic standards/stimulate, motivate and demand more of children/teach how to learn, think for themselves/allow progress at own level/give and check homework/instil better study habits.	21	11	15	51	25	41	27	21	8	14	18	8	16	15	20
Provide religious education/optional religious classes/catechism classes/morning prayers/teach creationism.	9	11	10	-	8	3	7	13	28	20	3	29	16	18	13
Improve quality of teaching/need teachers who are more caring, dedicated, interesting/need more male teachers/ should be more concern for children than administration/ too many teachers being fired/too much staff movement/ need fresh blood/find new ways to evaluate teachers so not only beginners are let go.	18	3	8	19	33	25	34	10	5	8	5	3	4	6	11
Have smaller classes/lower PTR/more teachers, fewer administrators/more individual attention.	21	3	11	19	13	16	14	5	5	5	8	5	7	6	9
Need more structure/less wasted time/fewer frills/ fewer field trips.	18	5	11	8	-	5	8	-	-	-	-	18	9	5	6

TABLE 8

Suggestions for change (cont'd)	PRIVATE							SEPARATE							
	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Private	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Separate	Total
	East (N= 34) %	West (N= 28) %	Total (N= 72) %	East (N= 37) %	West (N= 24) %	Total (N= 61) %	(N=133) %	East (N=39) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=79) %	East (N=38) %	West (N=38) %	Total (N=76) %	(N=155) %	(N=288) %
Abolish open classrooms.	21	3	11	8	-	5	8	10	-	5	-	3	1	3	6
Eliminate junior high system/prefer K-8	-	-	-	-	11	7	3	3	-	1	21	5	13	7	5
Provide more help for special education children/ full day program needed for perceptually handicapped/need better assessment program/need better training for special education teachers.	-	-	-	11	4	8	4	3	-	1	-	3	1	1	2
Other - reopen local school/school closings are upsetting and create instability for child/don't like busing - introduce French in earlier grades/give more French instruction - teach more languages in lower grades - abolish split grades - provide better enrichment program/consistent programs in all schools - provide better guidance - offer courses in values, nutrition - abolish team teaching - teach Hebrew - should be more comptetion to encourage greater effort - stop pandering to other cultures/they should learn to accept our cultures and values							27							15	18

TABLE 8

Suggestions for change (cont'd)	PRIVATE							SEPARATE							Total (N=288) %
	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Private (N=133) %	Grade JK-3			Grade 4-6			Total Separate (N=155) %	
	East (N=34) %	West (N=38) %	Total (N=72) %	East (N=37) %	West (N=24) %	Total (N=61) %		East (N=39) %	West (N=40) %	Total (N=79) %	East (N=38) %	West (N=38) %	Total (N=76) %		
Other (continued)															
- change reporting system from anecodotal to comparative measure															
- instil better school spirit so children feel involved															
- concentrate on academic program/parents can do field trips, etc.															
- need better communication between school and parents/ need to hear about problems earlier															
- encourage more parental involvement at school															
- have fewer PD days															
- stop the rapid changes in curriculum															
- admit child to School for Talented															
- have greater accountability up the line from teacher to Assistant Superintendent															
- do something about dropouts															
- have special classes for immigrant children with language problems															
- better coordination of program between junior and senior high schools															
- offer ethnic programs on Saturday															
- amalgamate public, private and separate schools into one system															
- close inefficient schools (poor teachers)															

APPENDIX C

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR
THE CITY OF NORTH YORK

5050 YONGE STREET · WILLOWDALE
ONTARIO · M2N 5N8 · TELEPHONE 225-4661

TRUSTEES
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DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
AND SECRETARY-TREASURER

October 14, 1981

Dear Parent

As part of our efforts to provide better programs for our students we are seeking information from some parents in the community. We are particularly interested in finding out why parents have transferred their children to the public school system from either separate or private schools.

According to our records, your child transferred into a North York school during the school year 1980-81. We would like to know what reasons you had for enrolling your child in one of our schools. Would you please complete the attached survey and return it to us, in the envelope provided, by October 26. Any information you furnish will be treated both anonymously and confidentially.

Your co-operation in completing the questionnaire is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions concerning this survey please call Mr. Tom Wilson at 225-4661, Local 446.

Sincerely yours

K. Kinzinger
Director of Education

TW/KK/jp
Encl.

SURVEY OF PARENTS WHO HAVE TRANSFERRED THEIR CHILDREN INTO NORTH YORK SCHOOLS

1. Is the school that your child attends:

East of Yonge Street [ ]

West of Yonge Street [ ]

2. What grade is your child in this year?

JK [ ] SK [ ] Gr. 1 [ ] Gr. 2 [ ] Gr. 3 [ ]

Gr. 4 [ ] Gr. 5 [ ] Gr. 6 [ ]

3. What were the most important considerations in your decision to send your child to a North York school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Were there any difficulties in the private/separate school which influenced your decision to transfer to a North York school?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

If YES, please elaborate.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. What do you think your child has gained as a result of this move?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Is there anything you think your child has lost as a result of the move?

7. Are you planning to keep your child in the North York system?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

If NO, would you please explain why?

8. Are there any changes that could be made in North York schools which would make them more appealing to you?

9. Other comments.

PLEASE RETURN IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED BY OCTOBER 26

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION